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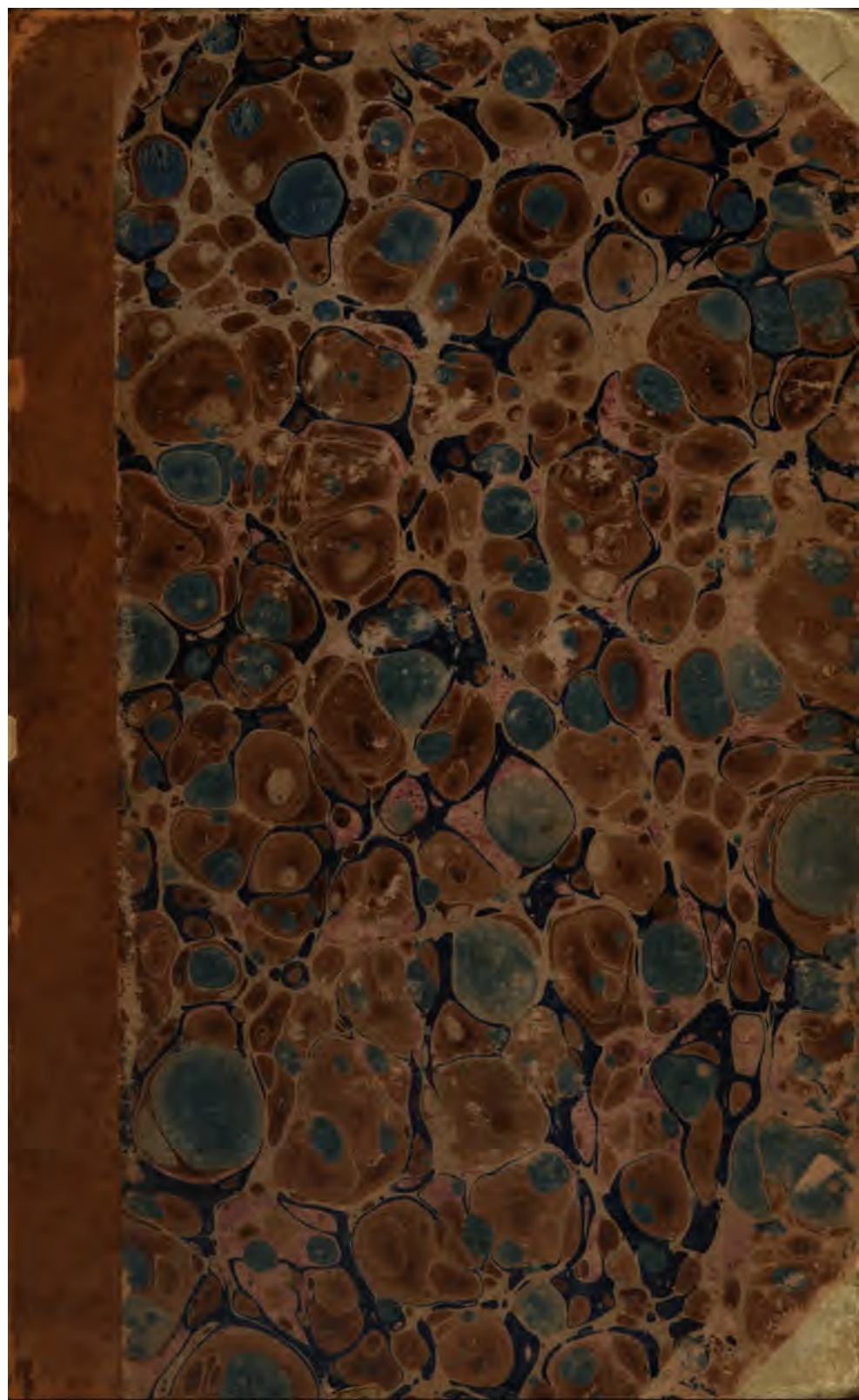
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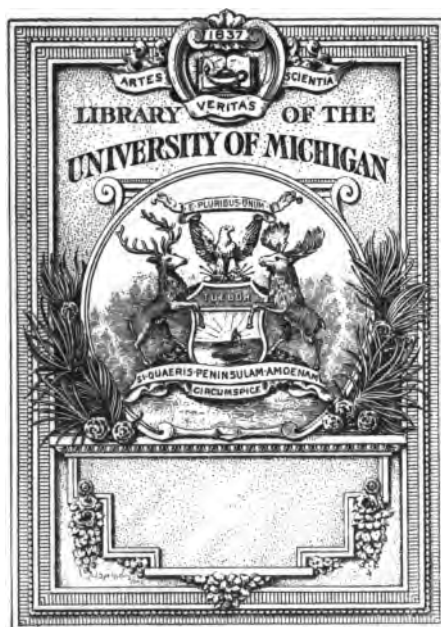
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Vindication of the Colonies  
1764

168











A N  
E S S A Y

IN VINDICATION OF THE  
CONTINENTAL COLONIES

O F  
A M E R I C A,

F R O M

A Censure of Mr ADAM SMITH, in his  
Theory of Moral Sentiments.





AN  
ESSAY

IN VINDICATION OF THE  
CONTINENTAL COLONIES

OF  
AMERICA,

FROM

A Censure of Mr ADAM SMITH, in his  
Theory of Moral Sentiments.

With some Reflections on Slavery in general.

By an AMERICAN.

*By A. D. H. L.*

*Refellere sine iracundia, et refelli sine pertinacia, paratus sum.*  
Cic. Tusc. Disp. lib. ii.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

RESEARCH REPORT

NO. 101

1950

BY

ROBERT H. EMMETT

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

FOUR years having now elapsed since the publication of Mr Smith's *Theory of moral sentiments*, the world may well be surprised, that the censure we are hereafter to refute, should have remained so long unanswered. For that reason, perhaps; this answer may be deemed somewhat late; but the author hopes, that the vindication of truth from misrepresentation; of innocence from unjust aspersions, though it be late, will never be unacceptable. The charge is general. It seems to aim at all the American colonies which employ the African slaves; and yet he will venture to assert, that it is not applicable to any one of them. The slaves in the French, Spanish, and Portuguese settlements are not treated with more, if with so much severity, as those of some of our colonies; nor do the inhabitants consist of the refuse of their respective countries. For the truth of this he appeals to their histories \*. He

\* See the account of America.

Am. 2. 7. 12 35

iv    A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

flatters himself with having proved, in the following essay, that the charge is not applicable, with the least shadow of truth, to our continental colonies. In the West-India islands, it must be acknowledged, that the slaves undergo a very severe labour; but could this authorise Mr Smith to reflect on the inhabitants, in such opprobrious terms? Could he justly infer from thence, that they were utterly destitute of every virtue, or abandoned to the influence of every infamous and detested vice? The Africans he might have exalted into heroes, however little they deserve that name, with less offence. Where the motive appears benevolent, we more easily pardon a trespass against truth. But was it necessary to this end that the Americans should be debased into monsters? that they should be treated with reproaches more rigorous than the severest justice, unmitigated by the least humanity, would utter against the most perfectly vicious? And here, though it relate not immediately to our subject, yet, as an American, the author may presume to offer a few remarks on what Mr  
Smith

## ADVERTISEMENT. ▼

Smith has related, concerning the American savages. The virtues with which he has endowed them, and the particular customs he has said to prevail among them, are not in the least conformable to our experience. We have ever found them perfidious to the last degree; actuated in all their wars by the most atrocious and ungovernable cruelty; of natures at once so cowardly and cruel, that whilst they dare not ever face an enemy prepared, they will butcher him, if unguarded or defenceless, with the most ruthless barbarity. When their kings or chiefs visit us in the colonies, they are frequently accompanied by their wives and concubines\*; so far are they from blushing at their female connections. They are not upon an equality, as it hath pleased Mr Smith to observe, but governed universally, as far as we know, by their kings or chiefs. His instances of magnanimity and fortitude, in sustaining the pains of torture and death with the most intrepid firmness, are applicable only to the Mexicans and Peruvians; such as the Spa-

\* Commonly called their *squaws*.



## vi ADVERTISEMENT.

niards first found them; for at present, even among them, this spirit is almost wholly extinguished. But surely Mr Smith cannot style these the savages of America. Whoever will read their history; may see how little they merit this indignity. "The police of the Mexicans," says Mr VOLTAIRE \*, "was in every other respect †, prudent and humane? Astronomy was carried to as great a height among them as among the Egyptians. They had reduced war to a regular art. Their public treasury was managed with the greatest exactness." From his description of Mexico, it appears to have been at once the residence of gaiety, magnificence, police, and arts. "The city," says he, "abounded with spacious and convenient houses, built of stone; noble squares, market-places, and shops full of the most curious pieces of workmanship, carved and en-

\* See Dr Smollet's Voltaire, vol. 4. p. 202.

† Except in sacrificing prisoners to their gods. But if this should stamp them savages, what name shall we find for the Spaniards, who sacrificed those very people, with every circumstance of the most horrid barbarity, to the basest of all idols, the god of avarice?

"graved

## ADVERTISEMENT. vii

“graved in gold and silver, rich vessels of  
“painted porcelain; cotton stuffs, and  
“ornaments of feathers, which formed the  
“most beautiful patterns, by the variety  
“of their colours and shades. Near the  
“great market-place stood a palace, where  
“all disputes between the traders were  
“decided in an expeditious manner, like  
“those justice-courts of the consuls at  
“Paris, which were first established by  
“Charles IX. after the destruction of the  
“empire of Mexico. Several palaces be-  
“longing to the Emperor Montezuma  
“added to the magnificence of the city.  
“One of them raised on columns of jasper,  
“was set apart for containing the curiosi-  
“ties which minister only to pleasure;  
“another was filled with offensive and de-  
“fensive weapons, richly adorned with  
“gold and precious stones; a third was  
“surrounded with spacious gardens, whol-  
“ly destined to the raising of medicinal  
“plants, which proper officers distributed  
“to the sick, and gave an account of the  
“success attending the use of them to the  
“king. These physicians likewise kept a  
“register

## viii ADVERTISEMENT,

“ register of cases, after their manner, being unacquainted with writing. The other articles of magnificence only prove the progress of arts in that kingdom ; this latter shews the progress of morality \*.”

THUS much being premised, the author now entreats the reader to proceed with candour to the perusal of the following sheets.

\* See Dr Smollet's *Voltaire*, vol. 4. p. 200.

AN

A N  
E S S A Y  
IN VINDICATION OF THE  
CONTINENTAL COLONIES  
O F  
A M E R I C A.

**I**N the 316th page, 2d edition, of the  
*Theory of moral sentiments*, by Mr Smith,  
Professor of morality in the college of  
Glasgow, are these words :

“ THERE is not a negro from the coast  
“ of Africa, who does not, in this respect\*,  
“ possess a degree of magnanimity, which  
“ the soul of his fordid master is scarce  
“ capable of conceiving. Fortune never  
“ exerted more cruelly her empire over  
“ mankind, than when she subjected those  
“ nations of heroes to the refuse of the

\* In fortitude.

B

“ jails

“ jails of Europe, of wretches who possess  
 “ the virtues neither of the countries  
 “ which they go to, nor of those which  
 “ they come from, and whose levity, brutality, and baseness, so justly expose  
 “ them to the contempt of the vanquished.”

THAT I may give my reader a just idea of the equity and humanity which could dictate this extraordinary paragraph, I must beg leave to lay before him two things. First, An authentic account of the African slaves, who are the objects of its praise and compassion; and, secondly, Of the American colonists, who are here the objects of as bitter an invective as ever fell from the tongue of man.

*An Account of the Africans.*

IT is not to our purpose to give any account of the inhabitants of Africa in general, but of those parts only which furnish us with slaves, namely, of Negroland and Guinea.

WE

WE learn, from the most authentic accounts, that the negroes in Africa have just as much natural sagacity as fits them for very dextrous rogues.

THEY are so prone to lying, that they exercise this faculty on every occasion \*. No contracts are sacred with them, for they break these whenever they have the least prospect of advantage, and sometimes out of mere wantonness. This genius prevails in all their compacts, as well domestic as national. It is on this account that their marriages are perpetually violated. They either expose their wives publicly for gain, or employ them as decoy-ducks for strangers, whom they, by that means, surprise and plunder †. In private life they are frequently guilty of the most horrid murders ‡. It is usual for one nation to fall upon another without either cause or warning, but as whim or villany shall prompt. In the field, they are without either discipline or courage. “ Their natural cow-

\* Churchill's collection, vol. 5, p. 236. † Ib. p. 242.

‡ Ibid. p. 236.

“ardice,” says Churchill, “is the reason  
 “that few men are killed in battle; for  
 “they are so extremely timorous, that as  
 “soon as ever they see a man fall by them,  
 “they betake themselves to their heels,  
 “and run home with all possible expedi-  
 “tion \*.” The cruelty which is insepa-  
 rable from cowardice, impels them, when  
 victorious, to the most savage barbarities.  
 They slaughter their vanquished or defence-  
 less foes with the most unbounded fury:  
 nor age, nor innocence, nor impotence is  
 spared: one bloody and undistinguished  
 massacre overwhelms them all. We read,  
 with horror, of their sucking the blood  
 of their enemies; of their ripping open the  
 teeming womb, and dashing the infant a-  
 gainst the stones, in view of the agonized  
 mother. Some they dismember alive, and  
 leave to groan out their miserable lives in  
 helpless anguish. Blood and desolation at-  
 tend their steps, devoting every thing that  
 is defenceless †. Thus do they endeavour  
 to satiate their savage appetite for blood;  
 an appetite that burns with implacable

\* Churchill's collect. vol. 5. p. 294. † Ib. p. 236. 331.

fury,

fury, and urges them to the most horrid barbarities, in violation of every sentiment of justice, humanity, or magnanimity.' At their burials they sacrifice slaves, and, what is horrible above all names of horror, they have a market on purpose to answer this diabolical demand \*. Cruelty, cunning, perfidy, and cowardice, are their characteristics. In their trade with the Europeans they practise all manner of frauds. Their method of feeding is not one remove above absolute brutes; no degree of corruption will deter them from preying on whatever they find, and that in the most voracious and filthy manner †. Their religious worship is perfectly conformable to the universal depravity and barbarism of their natures. They are involved in the most gross idolatry, worshipping almost every thing, animate and inanimate, with the most stupid reverence ‡. To snakes of every kind they pay a constant worship, and they honour the devil with what may be truly termed *infernal rites* ||. But endless were the list

\* Churchill's collect. p. 285.

† Ibid. p. 255.

‡ See Harris's collection.

|| Ibid.



of their barbarities. I have already recounted enough to shock the most common humanity; I shall therefore close the ungrateful subject with Baron Montesquieu's account of this people. "The greatest part of the people on the coast of Africa," says he, "are savages and barbarians. The principal reason of this is, I believe, that the small countries capable of being inhabited, are separated from each other by large and almost uninhabitable tracts of land. They have gold in abundance, received immediately from the hand of Nature; but they are without industry or arts. Every civilized nation is therefore in a condition to traffic with them to advantage, by raising their esteem of things of no value, and receiving a very high price in return\*." To this I shall add the character which the author of the account of America gives them as slaves; an author who cannot be suspected of partiality. In his history of the Spanish settlements, he

\* Spirit of laws, vol. 2. p. 22.

says,

says, " The blacks here, as they are im-  
 " ported from Africa, have the same cha-  
 " racter as the blacks of our colonies, stub-  
 " born, hardy, of an ordinary understand-  
 " ing, and fitted for the gross slavery they  
 " endure." " Nothing," says he, in ano-  
 " ther place, " could excuse the slave-trade  
 " but the necessity we are under of peo-  
 " pling our colonies, and the consideration,  
 " that the slaves we buy were in the same  
 " condition in Africa, either hereditary,  
 " or taken in war. I know they are stub-  
 " born and untractable, and must be ruled  
 " with a rod of iron." It is this stubborn,  
 stupid, and untractable disposition to which  
 it hath pleased some to give the name of  
*magnanimity* and *heroism*.

---

O name !

*O sacred name of magnanimity profan'd !*

Magnanimity, according to Mr Hutcheson,  
 is an elevation and firmness of soul, which no  
 circumstances of fortune can move ; aim-  
 ing solely at moral excellence in all its con-  
 duct. The opposite extreme is pusillani-  
 mity, or cowardice, rendering a man use-  
 less

less and miserable \*. Which of these characters is most applicable to the disposition of the negroes, I shall leave to the determination of the candid reader. Abandoned indeed, beyond all instance of depravation, must they be, whose stronger vices should justly expose them to the contempt of this people.

\* Hutcheson's Ethics, p. 28.

*Of the continental colonies of America.*

**V**IRGINIA, Maryland, and the Carolinas, are the chief and almost only colonies on the continent, which employ the African slaves. On these, then, the censure must fall heaviest, and from these only I shall endeavour to repel it.

*Account of Virginia.*

**I**N the year 1584, Sir Walter Raleigh, attended by many persons of eminence, and many reputable merchants, with letters patent from her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, settled the first British colony in North America, and, in honour of his Queen, called it, in general, *Virginia*.

THAT settlement, however, was not what we now properly call *Virginia*. Innumerable losses had almost utterly destroyed the colony, notwithstanding the reinforcements sent from time to time, under Sir Thomas Gates, Sir Richard Greenville,

ville, Sir George Summers, and others; when the Lord Delaware, a nobleman of very uncommon virtues, arrived in the bay of Chesapeake, and, with his own men and the remainder of the former colony, established on that bay a settlement, which gave birth to the present colony of Virginia. The wisdom and care of this worthy Lord made the young colony prosper; and in this condition he left it under the governance of a son, who inherited his father's virtues. A council he had to assist him, composed of Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Summers, Sir Ferdinand Wenman, the Honourable George Peirce, and Mr Newport.

SUCH was the settlement of Virginia, than which, perhaps, no colony had ever a nobler foundation. Her founders were distinguished, even in Britain, for rank, for fortune, and for abilities. Not urged by vice or want, they voluntarily exposed themselves to a thousand hardships, to extend the dominion of their country. They braved the dangers of an unknown sea and  
savage

savage land, to enrich her commerce, and exalt her power. I know it will be said, their views were not so disinterested; they acted with the hope of promoting their own fortunes. Perhaps they might; yet this detracts not from their merit. That individual who best promotes the interest of the public with his own, is most laudable. The nature of man admits not of such disinterested action, and the nature of society seldom demands it; for the good of the whole is rarely to be separated from that of the individual \*. Were such action to be the criterion of a good citizen, how few would stand the test? Does the merchant wind through the laborious and uncertain labyrinth of commerce for the public, or for his own emolument? does the warrior brave the field of death, or tempt the hideous wave, to serve his country or himself? It cannot therefore be denied, that the founders of this colony deserved the highest veneration and esteem of their country.

\* We shall endeavour to demonstrate, says my Lord Shaftesbury, that to be well affected to the public interest and one's own; is not only consistent, but inseparable. *Characteristics*, vol. 2. p. 59.

——— *Cælestes animæ !*

*Nulla dies unquam memori vos eximet ævo !*

AND here I cannot help lamenting the unequal condition of their descendants, the present inhabitants. Their manufacturing hands tied up ; their commerce confined \* ; and their staple commodity oppressed with such intolerable exactions, that it yields to the labouring planter scarce one tenth of its original value. By these means they are subjected to the arbitrary impositions of the British merchants, who fix, like cankers, on their estates, and utterly consume them. Every means that the most confined and puny policy can suggest, are employed to depress them, and prevent their growth. They are treated, not as the fellow-subjects, but as the servants of Britain. The French colonies were nourished and endeared to their mother-country by the most humane and gentle government † ; whilst here the hardest discipline is used to check their

\* See Postlethwayte's dictionary, art. *Tobacco*.

† See the account of America, vol. 2. p. 40. on the French policy with regard to their colonies.

growth,

growth, and alienate their affections from Britain. When shall we learn the virtues, and shun the vices of our enemies? Here let me thank, thank from my heart, the generous man \*, who, despising the little, abject, selfish, coward politics of others, has remonstrated against these grievances in the colonies with equal humanity and truth. But solitary is the voice of universal benevolence, and like the notes of the dying swan, sweet, but unavailing.

I RETURN to my subject. The colony continued to flourish and increase, though gradually, until the unfortunate reign of Charles I. when it received a considerable reinforcement in the depressed royalists, who, flying from the ruin that threatened them at home, took refuge in Virginia. This colony long resisted the efforts of Cromwell and the parliament to subdue them, nor was it vanquished at length but by stratagem; and it is said to have been the first which threw off the yoke, and proclaimed King Charles II.

\* The author of the account of America.

SINCE

1807



SINCE that period the colony has received gradual increases by men from Britain, and other countries, who chose to seek their fortunes in a new and rising world. Before that time, in the year 1620, began a trade, the most unfortunate that could be devised, namely, the importation of African slaves, and, unhappily, it has to this day continued to increase.

IN the reign of Charles II. an act passed for the transportation of convicts to the British plantations in America \*. Virginia received her part of those who were transported. Amid such a number as are condemned, some will often be really innocent. Others, though guilty of the fault for which they suffer, may have been driven to it by the insupportable demands of want. For trespasses of this kind proceed oftener from necessity and indigence than from any wanton or ungovernable propensity to vice. When such criminals are transported to a country where there is

\* See Cay's abridgment, vol. 1. p. 532.

little opportunity, and still less necessity for stealing, it is not surprising that they reform, and become honest men. We cannot otherwise account for the extreme rarity of criminal executions in this colony. But such persons have been very rarely the founders of families which became afterwards eminent; there are certainly few, if any, in this colony, which can be traced from so mean an original.

THE government of Virginia, at this time, is pretty exactly conformable to the constitution of England. A governor represents the King. The council is composed of twelve gentlemen, appointed by the King and council in England, and invested with the title of Honourable. The lower house consists of members elected by their respective counties. The counsellors preside at the general court, and each county has its peculiar court, in which justice is impartially administered. The established and very universally received religion, is that of the church of England. This colony distinguished itself in the late war, by contributing

tributing largely to its support in men and money ; for the behaviour of her troops I appeal to the accounts of the campaigns in America.

I SHALL finish this account with the character of the inhabitants of this colony, given by a gentleman, whose veracity and knowledge cannot be questioned.

“ The inhabitants of Virginia are a cheerful, hospitable, and many of them a genteel, though somewhat vain and ostentatious people. They are, for the greater part, of the established church of England, nor until lately did they tolerate any other \*.”

THE same author, in speaking of the negroes, says, “ These do not here stand in need of such recruits, as in the West Indies ; they rather increase than diminish ; a blessing derived from a more moderate labour, better food, and a more healthy climate.”

\* Account of America, vol. 2. p. 217.

I AM sensible it is a common creed, that the negro slaves here are very barbarously treated : A creed that takes its rise from the reports of wretches, who frame falsehoods to catch the ear of vulgar credulity, or to gratify that strange propensity in some minds to calumny and misrepresentation. But no creed can be more ill founded, or more repugnant to truth. How it could ever have operated on a man of sense, as it seems to have done on Mr Smith, is to me really inconceivable. I have travelled through most parts of Scotland and Ireland; and I can safely assert, that the habitations of the negroes are palaces, and their living luxurious; when compared with those of the peasants of either of these countries. There is, I confess, an inexpressible misery, to the generous mind, in the very idea of slavery; but abstracting this, the condition of those slaves is far happier than that of the Scotch or Irish vulgar.

*Of Maryland.*

**L**ORD BALTIMORE, a Roman-Catholic nobleman, in the year 1632, obtained a patent from King Charles.I. for a part of Virginia. Soon after he sent his brother, the Hon. Leonard Calvert, accompanied by a number of Roman-Catholic gentlemen, to settle the land so granted. This they executed, and, in honour of the Queen, called the colony *Maryland*. The uneasy situation of the Catholics in England, especially at a time when their religion was an object of public jealousy, as well as odium, made them frequently seek an asylum in this colony; where they lived in safety and happiness under a proprietor of their own persuasion. This Lord was not, however, so bigotted a Catholic, but that he made his religion listen to political motives. He, therefore, gave his assent to an act, permitting a free and unquestioned exercise of their religion to all who professed Christianity. Encouraged by this toleration, men of every denomination, who were uneasy

easy in their circumstances, from whatever cause, pursued a happier fortune in Maryland. The colony, by these means, increased daily, and has, ever since, enjoyed a state of almost uninterrupted tranquillity. One revolution it has suffered, namely, that of having the religion of the church of England established in it.

THE inhabitants of Maryland are in general richer than their neighbours of Virginia, because more attentive to merchandise, and to their own interests; but they are therefore less sumptuous, as well as less hospitable.

*Carolina, North and South.*

THE first settlement in this country was made by the French, under the celebrated, but unfortunate, Admiral Chatillon. The inhuman tragedy of St Bartholomew, which cut off this illustrious man, destroyed also this settlement, the fate of which was grafted on his. The religious politics, which fatally engaged the French

court at this period, diverted their attention from external objects, and therefore from the support of this colony. The country lay thus entirely neglected until the year 1663, when a proprietary, composed of the noblest personages in Britain was impowered to settle there an English colony. This was executed upon a plan drawn up by the illustrious and learned Mr Locke. Its success, however, was not answerable to the brilliancy and wisdom of its foundation. Intestine broils had almost reduced it to ruin; when it was guarded from the destruction that hung over it, by the interposition of the British government. In 1728, the whole country was divided into the two separate districts of North and South. These were settled on the same establishment with Virginia and Maryland. The prosperity of the colony may be dated from this period; for since that time its inhabitants have continued to flourish, and are now both rich and happy; blessed with a very delightful country, and a prospering commerce. Charlestown is the chief town of note in either colony. "This," says the  
the

the account of America \*, “ is one of the  
 “ first in North America, for size, beauty,  
 “ and traffic. The planters and merchants  
 “ are rich and well-bred ; the people are  
 “ showy and expensive in their dress and  
 “ way of living ; so that every thing con-  
 “ spires to make this by much the liveliest  
 “ and politest place, as it is one of the  
 “ richest too in all America.”

HAVING thus presented my reader with  
 a true account of the African slaves, and of  
 the colonies which chiefly employ them ;  
 I must entreat him to read, once more,  
 Mr Smith’s charge.

“ THERE is not a negro from the coast  
 “ of Africa, who does not, in this respect,  
 “ possess a degree of magnanimity, which  
 “ the soul of his sordid master is scarce  
 “ capable of conceiving. Fortune never  
 “ exerted more cruelly her empire over  
 “ mankind, than when she subjected those  
 “ nations of heroes to the refuse of the  
 “ jails of Europe, of wretches who possess

\* Vol. 2, p. 258.

“ the



“ the virtues neither of the countries  
 “ which they go to, nor of those which  
 “ they come from, and whose levity, bru-  
 “ tality, and baseness, so justly expose them  
 “ to the contempt of the vanquished”

WE have seen that this his nation of heroes is a race the most detestable and vile that ever the earth produced. On the contrary, that the inhabitants of the colonies are descended from worthy ancestors, from whom he has not proved them to have degenerated, whilst others acknowledge them to be, at this period, a humane, hospitable, and polished people. Is it then to be conceived, that the former could merit the title of a nation of heroes, or the latter the ignominy of being styled, the refuse of jails, inhuman, brutal, base? Could prejudice operate so strongly on a human mind, as to make it sacrifice to an ill-conceived resentment, every principle of justice and humanity? Should not his own interest have taught him to reflect, that calumny, unsupported by proof, affects those only who utter it. Can the mind of a man of sense,

a philosopher, a moralist, be so strangely perverted? Prejudice is indeed a stain that will fasten on the best minds, yet that mind cannot surely be ranked among the best, wherein it sinks so deep as to produce such an outrageous trespass against truth.

THE ingenious theory of morals has, very deservedly, gained the world's esteem; and I am sorry it should contain any thing so unworthy of its general character. I am sorry, because I admire it, and wish I could have esteemed its author. It strikes me indeed at once with astonishment and concern, that the same heart which could dictate the goodness of the one, should ever be debased with the malignity of the other.

As the question touching the encouragement or abolition of slavery, is of the utmost importance to the colonies I have here presumed to vindicate; I shall not, I hope, be blamed, if my zeal should prompt me further to offer a few remarks on this subject.

LIFE and liberty were both the gifts of GOD. In a state of nature they were both equally sacred. When the increase, and other necessities of men, made the establishment of societies requisite ; it followed necessarily, that a portion of natural liberty should be sacrificed, to the more effectual preservation of the rest. This first subjected men to laws. The power of enacting these was lodged, by a majority of suffrages in each society, in a select number, denominated from thence *the legislative body*. Penal laws became soon necessary to the well-being of society ; and were proportioned to the nature of offences. For atrocious crimes, a deprivation of life was the most general punishment. Now, as liberty was subjected to the same power which made life the atonement for certain crimes, that might certainly have been sacrificed for similar or different offences. In this view therefore the origin of slavery seems just and legal ; whether it be equally political, is not the present question \*. Let us

\* The reader, if he pleases, may see it discussed in Montesquieu's spirit of laws, vol. 1.

now examine whether it may be lawful on any other foundation. Puffendorf admits two lawful causes of slavery, namely, consent and force \*. But, with submission to so great authority, I cannot help thinking, that neither of these is founded in justice. The introduction of slavery into any society is a matter of very great importance; it cannot, then, be presumed, that such an innovation ought to be at the option of every individual; whose consent alone can, therefore, never constitute him a slave. But further, every member of society owes some obedience and duty for the protection and immunities he enjoys; nor can he refuse those, without renouncing these. Whoever then consents to be a slave, as he, by this act, yields all his duty and obedience to his master; is no longer entitled to any privileges or protection from society. A slave therefore of this kind would be constantly an outlaw. Force has never been esteemed sufficient authority for enslaving, except in the case of a conqueror and his captive:

\* Vide book 6. p. 614.

nor is it so here; since it is founded on a right which is itself unjust, I mean the power of inflicting death on a prisoner. I have Mr Hutcheson's authority for asserting, that conquerors have no right to murder captives in cold blood\*; and it is plain from the nature of things, that they have no right to kill a prisoner, unless their own immediate safety absolutely requires it. When two men are in arms, they are both equally obnoxious, and may mutually destroy each other; but when one has laid down his arms, and submitted himself a prisoner, he ceases to be that dangerous person, and cannot justly be treated as such; nay more, he is in the place of one who has implored protection, which his adversary may, it is true, refuse him, or may confine him; but he cannot slay him, without violating the laws of justice and humanity: so that, unquestionably, all civilized nations concur in detesting the murder of prisoners in cold blood†. Grotius indeed thought very differently, when he

\* Moral philosophy, vol. 2. p. 210.

† Montesquieu's spirit of laws, vol. 1. p. 337.

said,

said, *Nec tempore ullo excluditur potestas occidendi bello captos* \* ; an inhuman assertion, indeed, and more worthy an African savage than an European philosopher. He has adduced examples to confirm his opinion ; but they are by no means conclusive. Even modern times may furnish some instances of captives put to death. That of Agincourt is remarkable: the situation of the victors there was certainly critical † ; yet could it be thence concluded to be legal at all times ? He undoubtedly founded his opinion more upon ancient dogmatism than upon ancient practice. For the truth of this, I appeal to the histories of Greece and Rome, in their more enlightened ages. The practice of barbarous nations, does not influence the question. It would be absurd, to draw the principles of justice from the practice of

\* *De jure belli ac pacis*, lib. 3. p. 689.

† Vide Dr Smoller's history of England, vol. 4. p. 326.

We have a far more lawless and cruel instance of this under the Marquis of Santa-Cruz, the Spanish general, who massacred the prisoners he took in an engagement with Don Antonio, his master's competitor for the throne of Portugal. See *Dr Smoller's Voltaire*, vol. 4. p. 304.

those, who owned no law but their own savage wills. No opinion can be of more weight than that of Baron Montesquieu, and it is clear here and pointed. “ From the “ right of killing,” says he, “ politicians “ have drawn that of reducing to slavery ; “ a consequence as ill grounded as the “ principle. There is no such right as re- “ ducing people to slavery, but when it “ becomes necessary to the preservation of “ the conquest. Preservation, but never “ servitude, is the end of conquest, though “ servitude may be sometimes a necessary “ means of preservation ; even in that case “ it is contrary to the nature of things, “ that the slavery should be perpetual \*.” In another place he has determined it to be expressly contrary, to both natural and civil law †.

Our question relates solely to perpetual slavery ; which appears to be unjust from any other origin, than the legislative power in each society.

\* Spirit of laws.

† Ibid. lib. 15. chap. 2.

To determine, then, whether the slavery imposed on the Africans be legal ; we are only to examine on what it is founded. The most authentic accounts of Africa inform us, that the slaves we procure are such as have been taken in the wars of their native kings, and sold, as is their custom, to the European factors ; or of such as have been trappann'd into servitude by the Europeans, or by their own countrymen, who are allured to such wickedness by European bribes. As the former method is unjust, the latter is detestable ; nor can any thing be more shocking to justice and humanity, than to encourage such barbarous tyranny, and such abominable craft.

THE violation, however, of justice and humanity, though great, is not the only evil that attends this encouragement. Aristotle, long ago, declared, that slaves could have no virtue ; but he knew not any who were so utterly devoid of any semblance of virtue as are the Africans ; whose understandings are generally shallow, and their hearts cruel, vindictive, stubborn, base, and wicked.



wicked. Whether this proceeds from a native baseness that fits their minds for all villany ; or that they never receive the benefit of education, I shall not presume to determine. Slavery indeed, of every kind, admits of little cultivation, and must therefore be always an enemy to virtue and science \*, which will be in danger wherever it prevails. Longinus, and with him many eminent men, have asserted, that even such a slavery as attends despotic government, is injurious, nay absolutely suppressive of all the noble exertions of the human mind. This they support by the example of many states, wherein the sciences flourished during their civil liberty, and were blasted immediately on the introduc-

\* Slavery, says Longinus, may deservedly be called *the prison of the soul, and the public dungeon*. How great an evil it was in Homer's opinion, may be learned from the following lines :

Ἡμῖν γὰρ τ' ἀρετῆς ἀποαίνονται Εὐρύστω Ζηνὸς  
Ἀνδρῆς, εὖτ' ἂν μιν κατὰ δόλιον ἤμαρ ἴλῃσιν.

ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙΑ, P. ver. 823.

*Juste fix'd it certain, that whatever day  
Makes man a slave, takes half his worth away.*

POPE.

tion

tion of despotism. It must, however, be confessed, that modern times present many exceptions to this opinion; for we now see both arts and sciences attain the highest perfection under arbitrary governments \*. Yet there can be no question but that the slavery of which we are treating must be injurious to science; since the minds of our slaves are never cultivated. The same reason will always render it unfavourable to trade and manufactures, which have ever flourished in free states. Commerce especially flies from oppression, and rests only under the wings of liberty †. If slavery then be necessarily an enemy to arts and sciences, good policy would surely direct us to suppress it. The danger too that threatens a state from the insurrections of slaves, furnishes a very strong argument against their admission. History, both ancient and modern, abounds with examples of the reality of this danger. The Helots ‡

\* See this point ingeniously discussed in David Hume's *Essays*, vol. 1. p. 151.

† Montesquieu on commerce, *Spirit of laws*, vol. 2.

‡ Plutarch's life of Cimon. Stanyan's *Grecian history*, vol. 1. p. 297.

had

had nearly destroyed the Spartan government, which so long derided the assaults of other foes. Rome herself, even in the meridian of her power and glory, was on the brink of destruction from the slaves whom she despised. Our ears are every day shocked with the barbarities, which attend the insurrections of the slaves in the American islands. Should not these warn the continent? why should those colonies trust that they alone, of all the nations which have yet tried, will escape the miseries of such rebellions\*? It is computed, that in the colony of Virginia the slaves exceed the freemen by more than one third; and that two or three thousand are yearly imported. Would not this be a fearful odds, should they ever be excited to rebellion? Much confidence may seem to arise from the native pusillanimity of this people, than whom the earth, I believe, never bore

\* Baron Montesquieu is of opinion, that nothing more assimilates a man to a beast, than living among free men, himself a slave. Such people are the natural enemies to society, and their numbers must always be dangerous. *Spirit of laws*, vol. 1. p. 348.

a more abject, coward race. But dastardly as they are, under an able leader, they may do much mischief; and as cowards are invariably cruel, should they ever be superior, not a shadow of mercy could be expected. History, in numberless instances, authorises this apprehension; and I remember, to this purpose, a remarkable saying of an experienced Athenian general, "That he would prefer an army of stags with a lion general, to an army of lions commanded by a stag."

"SLAVERY," says the illustrious Baron Montesquieu, "is in its own nature bad; it is neither useful to the master, nor to the slave. Not to the slave, because he can do nothing through a motive of virtue; not to the master, because, having an unlimited authority over his slaves, he insensibly accustoms himself to the want of all moral virtues, and, from thence, grows fierce, hasty, severe, cholerick, voluptuous, and cruel \*." Happily this

\* Spirit of laws.

prediction is not yet verified. But can there be a more urgent reason for suppressing slavery than the very danger of it? Can any curse be apprehended, worse than such a depravation? A depravation, at which humanity shudders, and reason stands appalled. I know it has been argued, that none but negro slaves could undergo the arduous toil of American culture; exposed or to the fervid heat of summer, or winter's piercing frost. But this is all imaginary. The free-born Briton, in many labours, sustains fatigues; that would make the pusillanimous heart of a slave, faint within him. Nor is this wonderful. The will should ever animate the deed; the will of a slave is never with his arm, whose nerves are therefore unstrung, and its vigour damped.

To sum up all, it is evident, that the bondage we have imposed on the Africans, is absolutely repugnant to justice. That it is highly inconsistent with civil policy; first, as it tends to suppress all improvements in arts and sciences; without which it is morally impossible that any nation  
should

should be happy or powerful. Secondly, as it may deprave the minds of the freemen; steeling their hearts against the laudable feelings of virtue and humanity. And, lastly, as it endangers the community by the destructive effects of civil commotions. Need I add to these, what every heart, which is not callous to all tender feelings, will readily suggest; that it is shocking to humanity, violative of every generous sentiment, abhorrent utterly from the Christian religion: for, as Montesquieu very justly observes, “ we must suppose them “ not to be men, or a suspicion would follow, that we ourselves are not Christians.” And here I must beg leave to repeat a former quotation, as it requires some remarks, which are most proper in this place. The ingenious author of the account of America says \*, “ Nothing indeed “ could at all excuse the slave-trade but “ the necessity we are under of peopling “ our colonies, and the consideration, that “ the slaves we buy were in the same con-

\* Vol. 2. p. 128.

“ dition in Africa, either hereditary, or  
“ taken in war.”

THERE cannot be a more dangerous maxim, than that necessity is a plea for injustice. For who shall fix the degree of this necessity? What villain so atrocious, who may not urge this excuse; or, as Milton has happily expressed it,

————— *And with necessity,  
The tyrant's plea, excuse his devilish deed?*

THAT our colonies want people, is a very weak argument for so inhuman a violation of justice; which, agreeable to Justinian, is *constans et perpetua voluntas, jux suum cuique tribuendi*.

NOR is there more validity in the latter argument. Shall a civilized, a Christian nation, encourage slavery; because the barbarous, savage, lawless African hath done it? Monstrous thought! To what end do we profess a religion whose dictates we so flagrantly violate? Wherefore have we that pattern of goodness and humanity, if we  
refuse

refuse to follow it? How long shall we continue a practice; which policy rejects, justice condemns, and piety dissuades? Shall the Americans persist in a conduct, which cannot be justified; or persevere in oppression, from which their hearts must recoil? If the barbarous Africans shall continue to enslave each other, let the dæmon Slavery remain among them, that their crime may include its own punishment. Let not Christians, by administering to their wickedness, confess their religion to be a useless refinement, their professions vain, and themselves as inhuman as the savages they detest.

I SHALL not presume to prescribe any method, by which they might better accomplish the purposes they mean to answer by slaves: but I observe it is the opinion of Mr Postlethwayte, that the colonies might be more advantageously peopled from Europe; and that it would be for the interest of the Europeans, to abolish the slave-trade; which, though profitable itself, is yet an insuperable bar to  
other



other more valuable improvements in Africa \*.

HAD Mr Smith, whose unmerited censure gave birth to this essay, instead of listening to the gratification of a slanderous prejudice, exerted his abilities, in dissuading the Europeans from such a barbarous trade; how great, how noble had been his deed!

*How had he blest'd mankind, and rescu'd me!*

\* See his Commercial dictionary.

F I N I S.

